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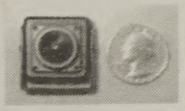

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Winners index

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best of gay atlanta

Readers make the difference in gay Atlanta

Readers picked **Jennifer Nettles**, a favorite of lesbian music fans, as Best Musician, while selecting **Raven** as Best Drag Queen. **Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse** was named Best Bookstore and readers voted **Craig Washington** as Local Hero/Male. (Cover design by John Nail)

The readers of Southern Voice don't hesitate to share their opinions. And when given the opportunity recently to tell us what's so good about the city we love, they jumped at the chance.

The ballot boxes for our inaugural Best of Gay Atlanta were stuffed with votes and our e-mail boxes overflowed with electronic ballots.

What we've compiled here are the picks of our readers in more than four-dozen categories, a selection varied enough to give you tips on where to find the best clothes, the best dining, the best bars and many others.

And not to focus only on the places that make gay Atlanta so special, we also include the people that make things happen. There's Mayor Shirley Franklin, the city's rookie mayor who's taken "gay-inclusive" to new heights in her young administration. Readers bestowed upon her honorary gay status by voting her Local Hero/Female.

There's also Cathy Woolard, the lesbian who turned her successful tenure as a member of the Atlanta City Council into a seat as that body's president. Her tireless work on behalf of gay issues, and residents of the city, made her a clear Editors' Choice for Local Hero/Female.

The list of special people includes many others, including businessperson Cindy Abel, Decatur City Commissioner Kecia Cunningham and longtime activist Jim Marks. When it came to who knows "best," our readers were right on top of it.

For this Best of Gay Atlanta, we hoped to present our readers with a way to name some of the best places and the most interesting people across the city. The response from them, and our advertisers, has been overwhelming.

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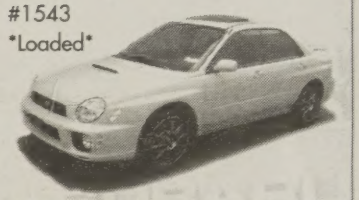
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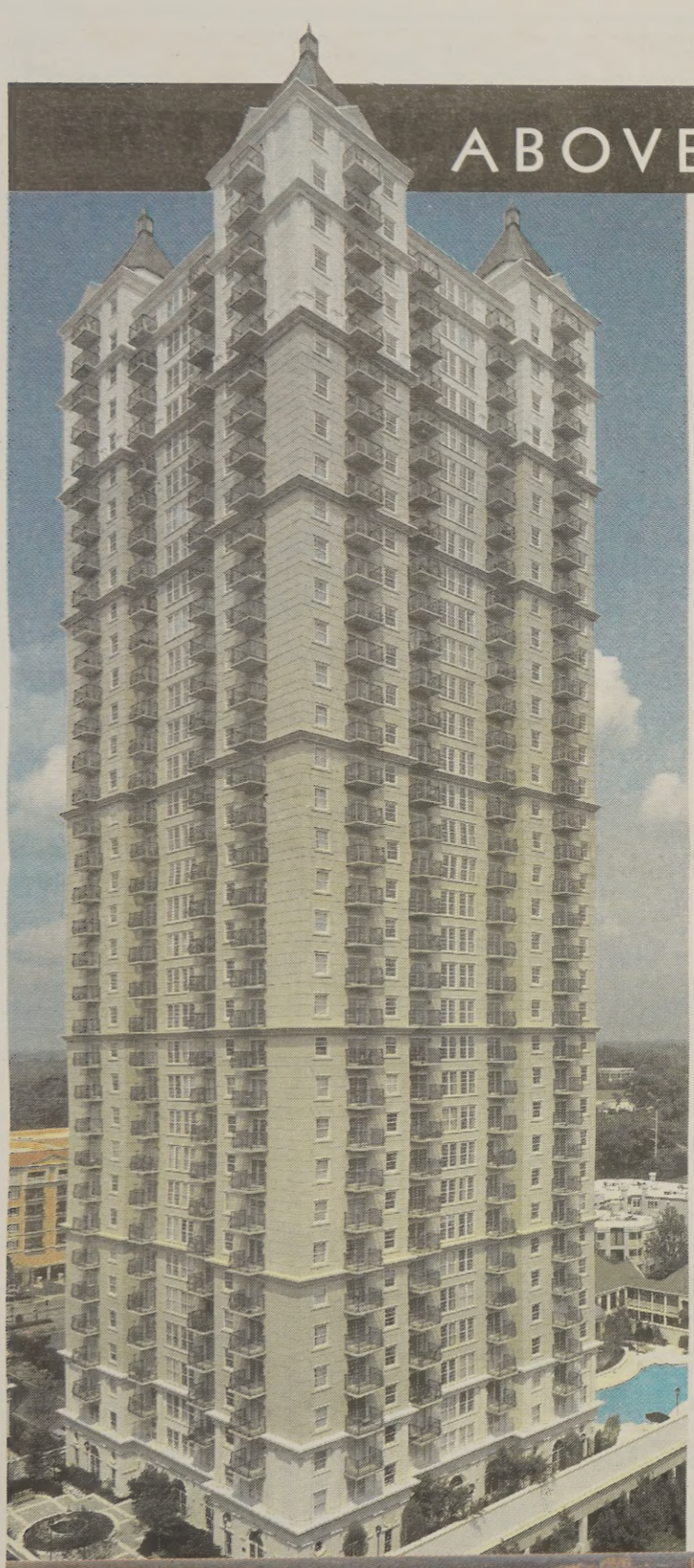

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best of gay atlanta

Best Brunch
Readers' Choice: Flying Biscuit
Editors' Choice: Park 75 at the Four Seasons Hotel

If your idea of brunch involves a gut-busting buffet, dressy clothes you'd rather not be wearing and sixteen members of your extended family, by all means make reservations at some convention hotel. But if you prefer the feel of lounging around a friend's kitchen table, make tracks for the Biscuit. While dinners at this pair of funky eateries sometimes overreach in their effort to be creative, the breakfasts are totally, reliably yummy, ample and soothing. Oatmeal pancakes with warm peach compote is one dreamy choice. Eggs scrambled with smoked salmon, cream cheese and basil is another. And of course there are those mile-high biscuits, which really do seem to fly. Second place went to **Einstein's**, third to **Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge**.

Best Overall Dining
Readers' Choice: Virginia's
Editors' Choice: Woodfire Grill

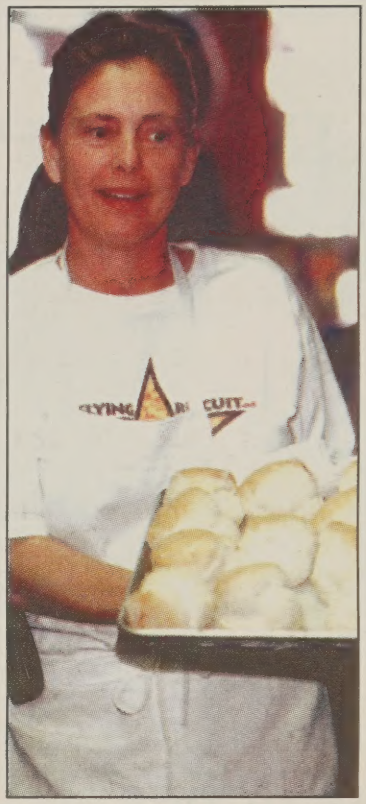
Though some critics have found it uneven, loyal patrons appreciate Virgina's earthy, inventive fare. Its roots are eclectic with tastes a little bit Mediterranean, a little bit Asian and a little bit Southwestern. Plates are presented with flair. Seafood specials are often tops. Another plus: prices for food and wine are quite reasonable. **Cowtipper's** took second, and **Nickiemoto's** placed third.

Most Romantic Restaurant
Readers' Choice: Virginia's
Editors' Choice: The Supper Club

It's the physical setting at Virginia's that gets lovers' pheromones flowing. Enter through the parking court of a trendy, renovated factory complex, then stroll through a lush, enveloping, trellised patio with a koi pond and burbling fountain. Once inside, the big, boxy space is rendered utterly charming with its collections of flea-market art, wacky lighting, Oriental carpets and velvet drapes. Tables are well-spaced for privacy, further enhancing the ability to whisper sweet nothings or slide an exploratory palm. **Apres Diem** placed second. and **Spice** came in third.

Most Trendy Restaurant
Readers' Choice: One Midtown Kitchen
Editors' Choice: One Midtown Kitchen

The look is spectacular, and the hipsters are turning out in droves to this recent arrival on the scene. A glowing purple wall, then a steel door, then an interior barrier of heavy drapes greets diners. Beyond them is an airy dining room with a sinuous curve of open kitchen, a bar with dramatic views over the park to the Midtown skyline and a dining terrace. Now that's trendy. And here's something else we hope will set a trend: artful contemporary food at noticeably moderate prices — entrees top out at around $19.



Flying Biscuit owner **Delia Champion** rushes with a hot pan of her restaurants' namesake. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

And a wine list divided into tiers, with every bottle priced at either $18, $28, $38 or $48. **Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge** and **Spice** were runners up.

Best Dessert
Readers' Choice: Cafe Intermezzo
Editors' Choice: Watershed

This authentically Italian-style café makes an intimate stop for a date, especially if seated on the romantically lit rear terrace. Cafe Intermezzo is also a destination for anybody with a sweet tooth. Visitors find an enormous selection of pastries. Coconut cake is a favorite, as are the numerous variations on cheesecake. There's also a huge range of coffee drinks and wines as well as a short meal menu. Second prize goes to **Joe's on Juniper**, whose goopy, just-like-you-wish-mama-used-to-make cakes come from Metrotainment Bakery. Third goes to the wittily inventive **Jake's Ice Cream**.

Best Value
Readers' Choice: Eats
Editors' Choice: Taqueria del Sol

Why is there always a crowd at Eats, the industrial-strength, cafeteria-style, assembly line of downmarket dining? Because the food is decent and the prices are ridiculously low. Never mind the ambiance, such as it is. Come for the pastas, the collard greens, and the wildly pop-

Please see **BEST** on **Page 7**

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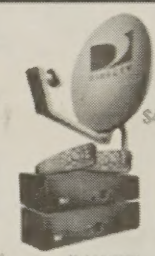
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BEST, continued from **Page 5**

ular jerk chicken. Through your interactions with both staff and clientele, you can tap right into our city's thriving urban-edgy youth culture. Who knows where that might lead — and wherever it might be, you'll still have a pocketful of change left over from dinner. First runner up, **Joe's on Juniper**, followed by the **Flying Biscuit**.

Best Late Night
Readers' Choice: Joe's on Juniper
Editors' Choice: Loca Luna

Joe's has one of the most accommodating patios in town — raised up above the whooshing traffic of Juniper Street and amply shaded by old oak trees. At night, the deck provides a sparkling view of the ever-more-dazzling Midtown skyline. Joe's location just blocks from so many gay venues makes it the logical destination when nocturnal ramblings require a stop for refueling. Nearly 150 beers and some 30 single malt Scotches are further reasons to go. Unpretentious as it is, Joe's is a thousand times more sophisticated than the second place winner, **Waffle House**, or the third, **Dunk 'n' Dine**.

Tried & True
Readers' Choice: Cowtippers
Editors' Choice: Collonnade

We don't know whether it's the beef they serve, or the beefcake lounging around on the patio that gives Cowtippers such a loyal gay following. Maybe it's just the specialty margaritas. But Cowtippers is an unquestionable favorite and a perennial winner. If the food is uneven, the lively atmosphere and warm welcome are always reliable. Best of all, it's not necessary to rinse your hair blue in order to feel at home here — as so many regular customers do for second place winner **Collonnade** and third place **Mary Mac's Tea Room**.

Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse is a gay Atlanta favorite—for books *and* coffee. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

Best Intown Restaurant
Readers' Choice: Joe's on Juniper
Editors' Choice: Wisteria

Votes in this category were a curious mix. First and third went to Joe's and **Agnes and Muriel's**, respectively. Both are laid-back, rollicking eateries that serve unfussy, standard American fare not much different from what you might have grown up eating. At Joe's, that's wings, burgers, sandwiches and such. But second place went to **Bacchanalia**, one of this city's undisputed temples of forward-looking, original, highly serious dining — reservations required a month in advance, exquisite and rare boutique ingredients, plates as artfully designed as what hangs at the High and a whopping big bill at the end of the evening. This seeming inconsistency only proves that judgments about restaurants are always subjective.

Best Restaurant on the Outskirts
Readers' Choice: Bambinelli's
Editors' Choice: Five Seasons Brewing

When queers say "family," we usually mean each other. At Bambinelli's the word has a more traditional meaning: family-run, homey and kid friendly. In business for over 20 years, the place has a loyal following of customers who are likely to bring their own folks there for events like a 50th wedding anniversary dinner. The food is traditional Southern Italian — cheesy and tomato-rich, thyme- and oregano-scented and pasta-based. It might not be on the cutting edge, but neither was Grandma's. And it's richly satisfying. Second choice was **Outback Steak House**, and third was **Canoe**.

Best Coffeeshop
Readers' Choice: Starbucks at Ansley Mall
Editors' Choice: Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse

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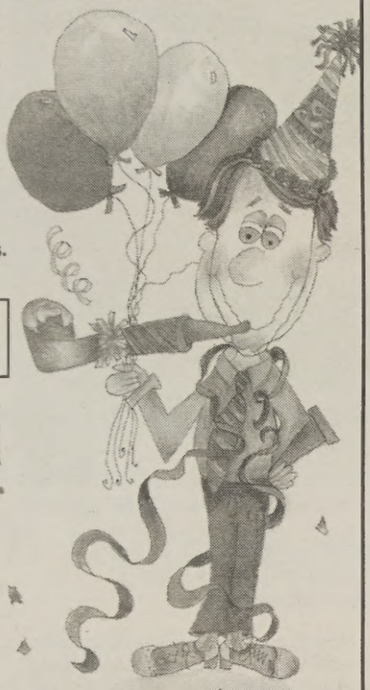

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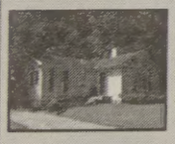

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best of gay atlanta

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sion to provide great coffee perfect proximity to where customers will be anyway. In the heart of the gay ghetto at the corner of Monroe Drive and Piedmont Avenue, with walking-distance access from Burkhart's, Oscar's, Disco Kroger and gay-popular hair salon Crimpers, the Starbucks at Ansley is a place to see and be seen when chillin' is the order of the day. A close second place went to gay-owned **Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse**; third place to **Java Monkey**.

Best Bookstore
Readers' Choice: Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
Editors' Choice: Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, Charis Books & More

Gay owner Philip Rafshoon has made Outwrite an entrenched part of the gay scene with thousands of gay and lesbian-specific titles and regular readings and book-signings from some of the biggest names in the business. A steady flow of customers all day come to browse the shelves for books and gifts as well as to socialize in the cozy '50s-inspired coffee lounge. Second place went to **Charis Books & More** for its lesbian and female-focused works; **Border's Books** came in third. And our editors just couldn't decide between Outwrite and the feminist community at Charis.

Most Interesting Crowd
Readers' Choice: Halo
Editors' Choice: Apres Diem

Why do queers love Halo so much? Could it be because it's not actually a queer bar? Welcome to the real world, where anyone — if not necessarily anything — goes. But more than clientele accounts for the strong draw. Halo is sophisticated but without pretension. The sounds are international groove. The bar — illuminated from within, and subtly changing color as the evening progresses — is the coolest thing around. Second place goes to **Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge**, and third to **Backstreet Atlanta**, both of which are also not exclusively gay scenes — which says something about how our lives and priorities may be changing.

Best Bartender
Readers' choice: David Watkins at Red Chair
Editors' Choice: Tim Wright at Blake's on the Park

A 24-year old man-boy, known for coifing his hair differently every day, found his niche at Red Chair and won the hearts of gay men to win this category. David Watkins, gay Atlanta's best bartender, said he is a natural for the job because he "loves people and alcohol" and doesn't have a problem remembering his patrons' drinks. And he's cute and single. The ladies almost won out with **Chloe** from My Sister's Room, who got second. Third went to **Tim Wright** at Blake's.

Best Place to Meet Men
Readers' Choice: Red Chair
Editors' Choice: Blake's on the Park

The hot new entry on the gay bar front is Red Chair. Our readers recognize it as the place to be seen and had. The large video screens provide a new approach — and alternative — to pulsing dance music so typical in other gay bars. And if you're in search of a crowd that ranges from twinks to preppy hunks, buy a drink and settle into a seat here. The cute bartenders aren't hard on the eyes, either. Second place went to **Blake's**; third place to the **Heretic**.

Best Bar in Midtown
Readers' Choice: Blake's on the Park
Editors' Choice: Halo

The venerable Blake's is always on the short list of places to hit on a weekend bar outing. With a crowd that's consistently attractive, Blake's provides an enjoyable

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Blake's on the Park is the ideal spot to have a few drinks and take in the scenery before heading to a favorite dance spot—that is if you don't end up taking some of that scenery home instead. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

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evening and a warm-up to the city's late-night dance spots. That's if you don't find Mr. Right Now and take your festivities to a more private locale. For a change of pace, stop by for the Sunday drag shows. Second place went to **Red Chair**; third place to **Halo**.

Best Lesbian Bar
Readers' Choice: My Sisters' Room
Editors' Choice: My Sisters' Room

Given the dearth of women's bars in Atlanta, it's no surprise that My Sisters' Room is tops in this category, both for our readers and Southern Voice editors. Yet even in a crowded field, this unique Decatur "parlour and garden" for women would shine. Sure, other nightclubs have bars, dance floors, pool tables and even patios. But where else can you hang out with hot women next to yard art that includes a double-decker bus and an old Cadillac, then sneak off to a real tee-pee for some special time with your special girl? Second place from our readers went to **Virginia's** on Thursday nights.

Best Place to Meet Women
Readers' Choice: My Sisters' Room
Editors' Choice: My Sisters' Room

Of course, the city's best lesbian bar would be our readers' and editors' choice as the best place to meet women, too. Smack in the middle of Dyke-catur, My Sisters' Room draws women of all types, with an emphasis on the young and hip. Watch for special events — like drag king shows and concerts — that might particularly attract your type of lady. **Virginia's** and **Hoedown's** took second and third in our reader survey.

Best Country Bar
Readers' Choice: Hoedown's
Editors' Choice: Hoedown's

When you want to pull yourself up by your boot straps, put a 10-gallon hat on your head and shake your ass to the tunes of favorite country singers, head to Hoedown's. It's easy to see why readers made this choice: The drinks are strong, the crowd is friendly and the times are fun. Lesbians make it their favorite place on Thursdays. On other nights, gay men are sure to find a variety of types and sizes with which to mingle, cruise, and two-step. Second place went to **Cowboys.**

Best Leather Bar
Readers' Choice: Atlanta Eagle
Editors' Choice: Heretic

Ask some gay men in Atlanta about the Eagle and their reaction is one of mock disgust. But peek inside the two-story structure on the weekend, and you're bound to find them inside. It's a reputation underserved for the Eagle, which features pounding music and a dance floor full of sweaty and hunky *men*. The Eagle certainly features a crowd you won't find anywhere else in the city, but it's a rich diversity that can make for a fun time. There's also a gift shop filled with toys for the leather crowd. Second place went to the **Heretic**; third place to the **Chamber**.

Best Bar Outside Gay Ghetto
Readers' Choice: Mary's
Editors' Choice: Mary's

As real estate prices skyrocket in Midtown, gay homebuyers are flocking to the charm and needs-a-little-attention properties in East Atlanta. And Mary's is quickly becoming the laid back place to be for area residents and even those who have to drive a bit to get there. The bar's easy access from Midtown, Little Five Points and I-20, as well as its reputation for drawing a fun mixed crowd to its quirky, funky, BradyBunch-inspired décor make it an easy choice for bar patrons inside and outside the up-and-coming gayborhood. Go late and stay until close. Second place went to **Le Buzz** in Cobb County.

Best Place for Live Music
Readers' Choice: Eddie's Attic
Editors' Choice: Eddie's Attic

Even under new ownership, Eddie's Attic remains the Southeast's proving ground for acoustic musicians, including no small number of queer singer-songwriters. Just a quick glance at the list of gay favorites who grace Eddie's stage — Indigo Girls, Kristen Hall, Michelle Malone, Halcyon — shows why this Decatur club is the top choice of both SoVo readers and editors when we're in the mood for music.

Atlanta Mayor **Shirley Franklin** ushers in a new era to City Hall. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

Local Hero: Female
Readers' Choice: Mayor Shirley Franklin
Editors' Choice: City Council President Cathy Woolard

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin credited gays with helping her win election last year, and SoVo readers handed her another landslide victory as our female local hero. Franklin's combination of no-nonsense leadership and easy accessibility brought a new era to City Hall, and gay residents have

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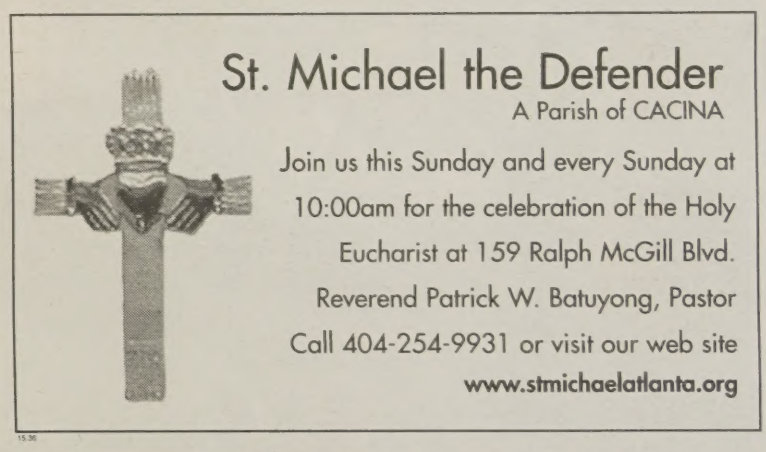
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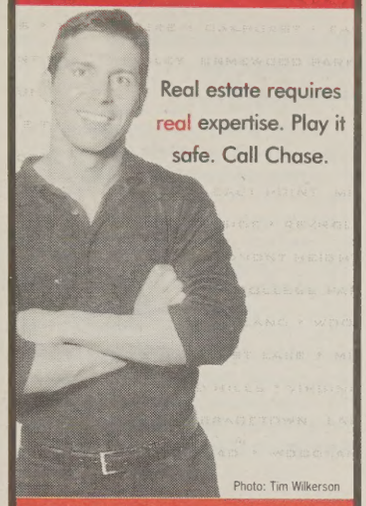

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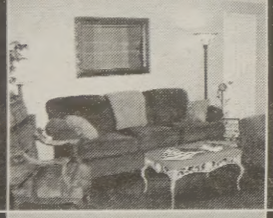

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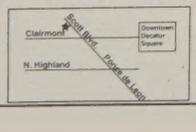

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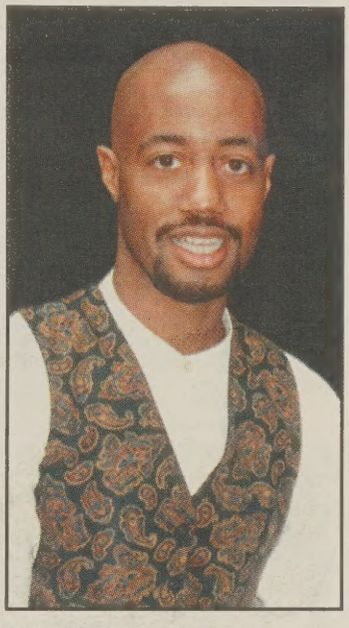
been welcomed to a place at her political table. Second in our readers survey — and our editors' choice for first — is Atlanta City Council President Cathy Woolard, the state's first openly gay elected official, and the second highest ranking municipal officer in the city. Our readers chose Q100 DJ **Melissa Carter** as third.



Craig Washington is at the forefront of gay activism.

Local Hero: Male
Readers' Choice: Craig Washington
Editors' Choice: Jeff Graham

Coming in just one vote ahead of Georgia Equality Executive Director **Allen Thornell**, Readers' Choice Craig Washington epitomizes the strength of local gay leadership. Now executive director of Atlanta's gay and lesbian community center, Washington's career here has provided a lesson on building bridges: between women and men, black and white, young and old, and those with different HIV status. Next on our readers' list after Washington and Thornell was Enlight Atlanta founder **Steve Epstein**, who recently moved to San Francisco. Jeff Graham placed first on our editors' list, for fighting the good fight from his days as a street activist with ACT UP Atlanta to his career as executive director at AIDS Survival Project.

Dynamic Couple
Readers' Choice: Cindy Abel & Barbara Rubin
Editors' Choice: Kecia Cunningham & Lenny Lasater

Cindy Abel and Barbara Rubin, our Readers' Choice for dynamic couple, have been partners for more than six years. In that time, they've also made their mark

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the Atlanta community. Rubin is a Fulton County court psychologist as well as psychologist in private practice. As president of bizvox Marketing Communications, Abel handles public relations for a number of gay groups and businesses, and her pro bono clients have included Georgia Equality and HRC Atlanta. Abel also serves on the national board of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund. Second place from the readers went to **Tim Wright** and **Tommy Field**. But after Decatur City Commissioner Kecia Cunningham's moving speech at this year's HRC dinner thanking her life partner, Lenny Lasater, SoVo editors had to give the nod to this long-term lesbian partnership.

Kecia Cunningham helped win domestic partner benefits for Decatur city employees.

Committed Activist: Female
Readers' Choice: Kecia Cunningham
Editors' Choice: Linda Ellis

When our Readers' saw "activist," they thought gay politics. Decatur City Commissioner Kecia Cunningham, the state's first openly gay African-American elected official, took first place over Atlanta City Council President **Cathy Woolard** by one vote. In addition to helping win non-discrimination protections and domestic partner benefits for Decatur city employees, Cunningham serves on the advisory board for CHRIS Homes, which provides housing for young people in need, and on the board of directors for Leadership DeKalb. Editors' Choice goes to Linda Ellis, who served as YouthPride's first executive director and now serves as ED of the Atlanta Lesbian Cancer Initiative.

Committed Activist: Male
Readers' Choice: Jim Marks
Editors' Choice: Jimmie Scott

Also or perhaps better known as drag queen Bubba D. Licious, Jim Marks has worked tirelessly on behalf of local AIDS

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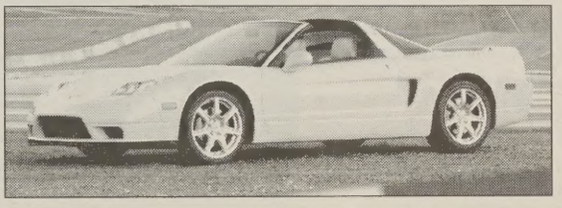

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organizations. By day, Marks serves as chief financial officer at the NAMES Project, which organizes the AIDS memorial quilt, after previously serving as CFO at AID Atlanta. By night, Bubba can be found on stages throughout the city, emceeing benefits supporting AIDS and gay causes. Second and third place went to **Duncan Teague** and **Tom Dempsey**. Jimmie Scott wins the editors' nod for his vocal work to increase visibility for black gays, from his work with Georgia Equality to the Black Gay Pride march.

Committed Activist: Trans
Readers' Choice: Monica Helms
Editors' Choice: Monica Helms

Name an issue important to transgendered people in Atlanta in the last few years, and Monica Helms has been there leading the fight — as both readers and editors clearly see. Helms serves as president of Trans=Action; her own activism has ranged from helping transgendered people negotiate the often hostile process of applying for drivers' licenses, to organizing an annual memorial for trans crime victims, to lobbying for inclusion of gender identity in non-discrimination laws. Second place goes to **Sir Jesse** of Decatur.

Monica Helms has been leading the fight for transgendered rights as president of Trans=Action.

Lesbian Cancer Initiative won second and third. For our editors, it's a tie between Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund and ACLU of Georgia for their extensive work, often side-by-side, in helping secure and defend the legal rights of gay Georgians.

Best Up and Coming Business Person
Readers' Choice: Dean Chronopoulos
Editors' Choice: Cindy Abel

With Atlanta's long-standing solid business and entertainment economies, newly married Dean Chronopoulos is "honored and humbled" to be chosen "Best Up and Coming Business Person" of the year. As the owner of gay-popular Roxx Tavern on Cheshire Bridge Road, Chronopoulos has "been very close to the gay community in Atlanta for many years through politics and business, and I could not have asked for a better clientele," he said. Roxx, which opened in June of 2000, epitomizes the casual pub atmosphere with an extensive bar, pleasant patio and a well-honed kitchen serving great steaks, salads and comfort food that keep gay Atlantans coming back. **Philip Rafshoon** and **Linda Bass** took second and third.

Best Gimmick Night
Readers' Choice: '80s Trivia at Joe's on Juniper
Editors' Choice: Karaoke at Mary's

The Metrotainment restaurant group that includes Einstein's, Joe's on Juniper and Cowtippers has long been recognized for its gay-friendly lunch and dinner venues. But things get special on Thursday at Joe's as teams of early Gen X-ers vie for pitchers of beer and a grand prize, testing their memories on trivia from the '80s. Categories include popular fashion, celebrities, music, television, politics and movies from the decade that just won't die. Second place went to **Virginia's** lesbian night; Bare Chest night at the **Heretic** came in third.

Most Effective Non-Profit
Readers' Choice: Project Open Hand
Editors' Choice: Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, ACLU of Georgia

You can't argue with numbers. Although readers honored a wide variety of local gay and AIDS groups in this category, Project Open Hand is the winner, well, hands down. Originally founded to provide meals and nutrition services to people with HIV/AIDS, the group has expanded its mission to include people with other serious illnesses and homebound seniors. In the past 14 years, the group has delivered more than four million meals, thanks to a dedicated staff and literally thousand of volunteers. **AIDS Survival Project** and **Atlanta**

Best Neighborhood Pub
Readers' Choice: Blake's on the Park
Editors' Choice: Burkhart's Atlanta

With walking access from gay-popular Piedmont Park and many gay homes and apartments, Blake's on the Park handily took this category with as many votes as its two closest competitors combined. With an English pub décor, high-energy videos and a crowd that swamps the place night after night, Blake's remains the undisputed champion of Atlanta gay bars. The venue recently added a food menu to its weeklong repertoire of DJs, Drag shows and special events, so they are primed and ready to keep customers walking through the doors all week long. Second place went to **Mary's**; **Joe's on Juniper** took third.

Please see **BEST** on **Page 16**

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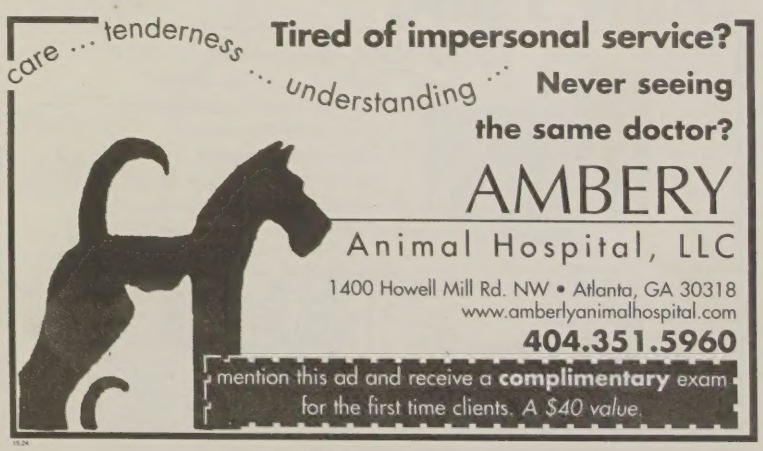
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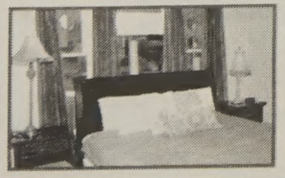

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best of gay atlanta

BEST, continued from **Page 15**

Best Happy Hour
Readers' Choice: Blake's on the Park
Editors' Choice: Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge

As gay Atlanta gets off work every day, it's time for many to go to Blake's to wind down. Prices drop and the place gets packed from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. For professionals who want to relax and unwind with some of the cutest guys and gals in Atlanta, it's no surprise that one of the most popular gay bars in Midtown also offers this kind of customer-appreciation on a regular basis. Following just one vote behind, **Red Chair** took second place; **Burkhart's Atlanta** came in third. Between the three, there's a happy hour in town for every taste.

Best Musician
Readers' Choice: Jennifer Nettles
Editors' Choice: Doria Roberts

She isn't gay, but gosh, the girls love her. Jennifer Nettles, our readers' choice for best local musician, first made a name for herself with the now defunct local band Soul Miner's Daughter, then went solo in 1999. Catch Nettles wowing audiences on the Atlanta Pride stage, or at venues throughout Atlanta — including Eddie's Attic, now owned by her husband, Todd Van Sickle. Angela Motter also got votes from our readers, while the editors' nod goes to Doria Roberts. In addition to her own powerful music, Roberts has taken the lead — from her Queerstock music fest and CD to being the impetus behind the recent Ladyfest South — in bringing other gay artists into the limelight.

Straight musician **Jennifer Nettles** is a lesbian favorite.

Best Drag Queen
Readers' Choice: Raven
Editors' Choice: Charlie Brown

It takes more than flashy costumes and big boobs to make a drag queen. You gotta have fake nails, wigs, originality, and pizazz. Not surprisingly, the readers chose to crown Raven as the best drag queen in Atlanta. Whether she's lighting a stage on fire or doing Wonder Woman, Raven wooed our readers. See her sparkle in Charlie Brown's Cabaret at Backstreet. The second choice was **Heather McDaniels** and **Bubba D. Licious** takes the bronze.

Please see **BEST** on **Page 19**

Readers crowned **Raven** Best Drag Queen.

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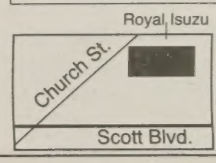

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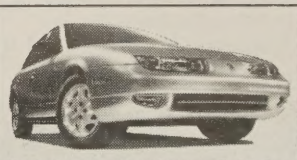

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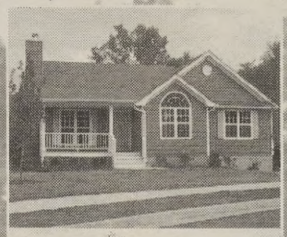

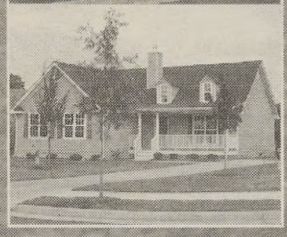

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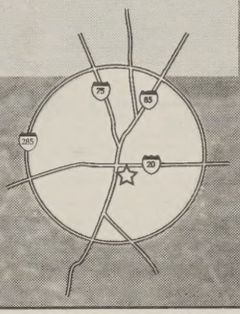

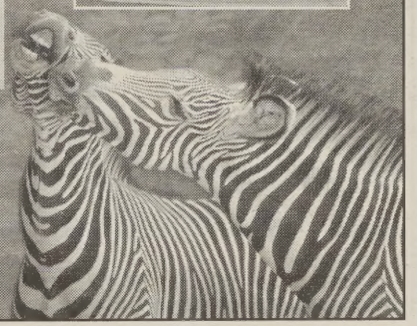

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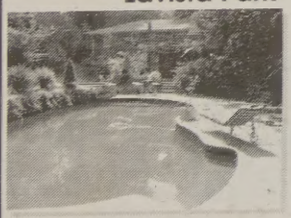

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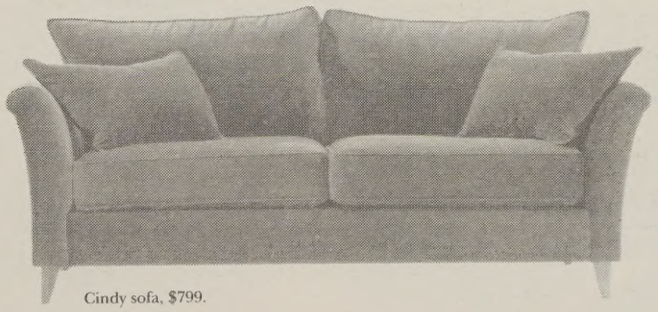

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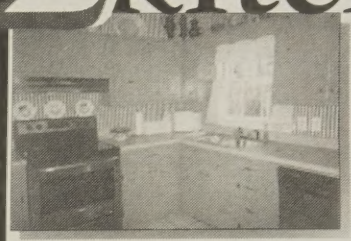

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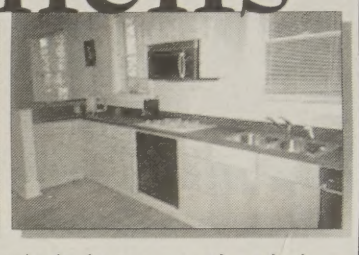

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BEST, continued from **Page 16**

Best Drag King
Readers' Choice: Cowboy
Editors' Choice: Atlanta Kings

Response from voters overwhelmingly support the homecoming king. Taking a whopping 88 percent of the vote, Cowboy wins the adulation of Southern Voice readers for being the best drag king in Atlanta. Cowboy performs as part of the Atlanta Kings, who perform at My Sister's Room fairly regularly. Don't miss the sweet young stud in a Halloween performance on Oct. 25. **"Kane"** took second place. Sadly, no one else got any votes. SoVo editors like the whole Atlanta Kings troupe so much, we refused to pick just one.

Best DJ
Readers' Choice: DJ Derrick Shawn
Editors' Choice: DJ Biff

The DJ responsible for the music at Blake's walks away with this coveted spinster's award. Curiously, no one dances at Blake's, but DJ Derrick Shawn keeps the voting barflies bobbing their heads in sync and sets the mood with the tried-and-true videos. **DJ Co Qui** finished second, and **Rob Reum** got third.

Best Dance Club
Readers' Choice: Backstreet
Editors' Choice: Blu

Atlanta's legendary **Backstreet Atlanta** took the title of Best Dance Club, nipping **Blu** and the **Heretic**. With its blaring techo music, strobe lights, a mixture of gay men (many shirtless at some point), Buckhead partiers and out-of-town visitors all on the nightclub's huge dance floor, not to mention the always-open doors, it's no wonder Backstreet boogied to this category.

Best Drag Show
Readers' Choice: Backstreet
Editors' Choice: The Armorettes

Nosing out **Blake's** and the **Atlanta Kings**, Backstreet Atlanta makes it two for two here. The world-famous X-rated cabaret features entertainment from the likes of Raven and Heather Daniels, but hovering over it all is emcee Charlie Brown, whose potty mouth and risque acts have made her a household name. Her shows sell out regularly – and don't you forget it!

Best Gym
Readers' Choice: L.A. Fitness
Editors' Choice: Fitness Factory, Extreme Bodyworks

Despite stiff competition from **Urban Body Fitness** and **Fitness Factory**, readers liked the 15-year-old L.A. Fitness, formerly known as Australian Body Works.

Please see **BEST** on **Page 21**

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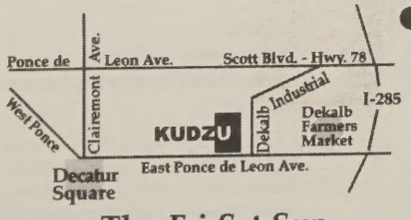

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best of gay atlanta

Sure, it's a great place to jog or walk your miniature doberman, but it's the cruising that keeps gay men flocking to Piedmont Park. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

BEST, continued from **Page 19**

From its convenient locations (almost a dozen spread throughout the metro area) to its flexible hours to its amenities (aerobics, racquetball courts, pools at some areas, and its attractive staff and members, L.A. Fitness reigns supreme.

Best Local Artist
Readers' Choice: K.T. Kilborn
Editors' Choice: Robert Sherer

Emory grad K.T. Kilborn's "Underground TRANSit," a one-person show dealing with gender-bender politics, has been staged at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival and recently by Theatre OUTlanta. A brave performer, she has been seen in mainstream roles ("As You Like It," "Fool For Love"), more unorthodox pieces such as "The Vagina Monologues" and worked with Karen Hughes at the W.O.W. Café and Theater. Kilborn is tops here, besting **Shannon Lake**.

Best Art Gallery
Readers' Choice: High Museum of Art
Editors' Choice: Timothy Tew

Though **Eye Drum** has its supporters, the High Museum of Art is the clear choice as Atlanta's best art gallery. With work on display from Michelangelo to Monet to the favorite paintings of Elton John, it's a classy and nationally renowned city landmark.

Atlanta artist **Robert Sherer** 's provocative—and often controversial—artwork caught the attention of Southern Voice editors.

Best Spot to Cruise
Readers' Choice: Piedmont Park
Editors' Choice: Home Depot

It is, after all, Atlanta and trying to narrow the list of cruise spots to one is a difficult task. But the tried and true Piedmont Park always comes through. There's cruising during the day along the vast green spaces, from dog walkers, runners to roller-bladers. There's always some jocks strutting their stuff on the tennis courts or the ballfields. And at night, cruising takes on a more focused feel, moving to the edge of the botanical gardens near Piedmont Avenue, or across the park near 10th Street and

Please see **BEST** on **Page 23**

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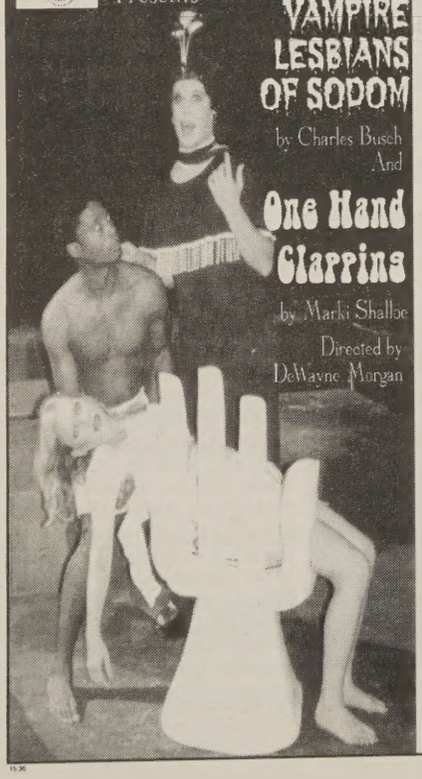

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best of gay atlanta

BEST, continued from **Page 21**

Monroe, where gay men cruise in their autos along the narrow parking lot that overlooks a corner of the Atlanta's version of Central Park. Second place went to the **Tara**; third place to **Publix**. Gay men are always certain to find a good screw at Home Depot on Sydney Marcus Boulevard, making it the favorite for Editors' Choice.

Best Theater
Readers' Choice: Fox Theatre
Editors' Choice: Actor's Express

Midtown's opulent Fox Theatre is your recommended place to see a theatrical show, beating out **7 Stages** and **Actor's Express**. And what's not to like about the decades-old auditorium, where a balcony seat literally sits you under the stars? It's the reigning Atlanta entertainment arena, hosting second-run Broadway shows ("Mamma Mia!," "Aida") as well as a summer film series and special events throughout the calendar year.

Best Video Store
Readers' Choice: Movies Worth Seeing
Editors' Choice: Southern Nights

While both **Blockbuster** and **Brushstrokes** are high on the list of places to rent a flick, the top choice (not surprisingly) is Movies Worth Seeing, which pleases everyone from the mainstream moviegoer to the pure cineaste. Besides new releases, it boasts more than a 100 gay and lesbian titles (many obscure), as well as the best selection of foreign releases in the city.

Best Music
Readers' Choice: Tower Records
Editors' Choice: Ed.'s Gourmet

Atlantans must like to finish their workout and then shop for new CDs. Tower Records is located next to L.A. Fitness. With its wonderfully eclectic range (pop, classical, soundtracks, disco, gay and lesbian faves, country, etc.), Tower is your fave place for new songs, edging **E.d.'s** and **Brushstrokes**.

Best Clothing
Readers' Choice: Boy Next Door Menswear
Editors' Choice: Banana Republic

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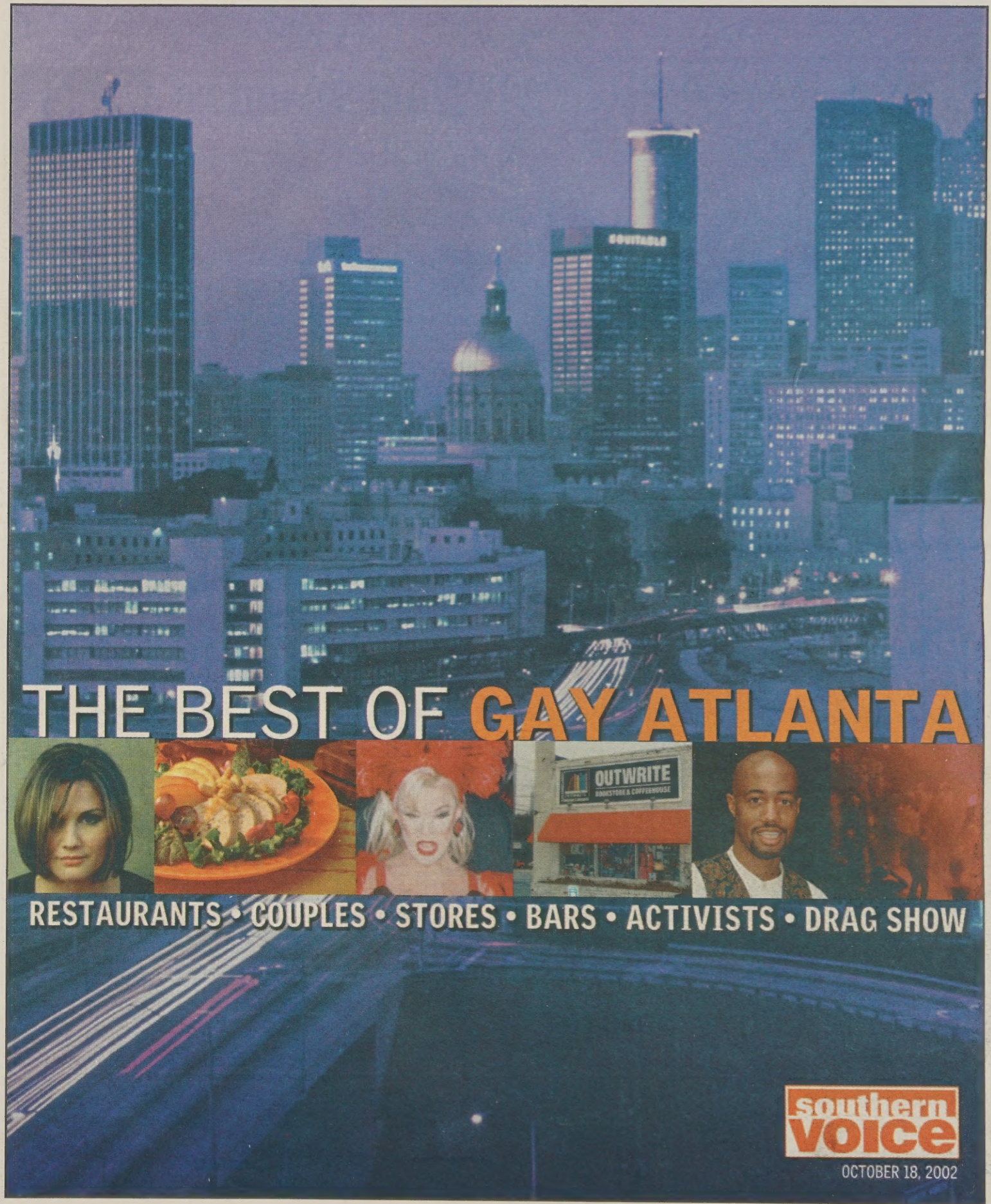

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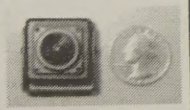

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best of gay atlanta

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Readers make the difference in gay Atlanta

Readers picked **Jennifer Nettles**, a favorite of lesbian music fans, as Best Musician, while selecting **Raven** as Best Drag Queen. **Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse** was named Best Bookstore and readers voted **Craig Washington** as Local Hero/Male. (Cover design by John Nail)

The readers of Southern Voice don't hesitate to share their opinions. And when given the opportunity recently to tell us what's so good about the city we love, they jumped at the chance.

The ballot boxes for our inaugural Best of Gay Atlanta were stuffed with votes and our e-mail boxes overflowed with electronic ballots.

What we've compiled here are the picks of our readers in more than four-dozen categories, a selection varied enough to give you tips on where to find the best clothes, the best dining, the best bars and many others.

And not to focus only on the places that make gay Atlanta so special, we also include the people that make things happen. There's Mayor Shirley Franklin, the city's rookie mayor who's taken "gay-inclusive" to new heights in her young administration. Readers bestowed upon her honorary gay status by voting her Local Hero/Female.

There's also Cathy Woolard, the lesbian who turned her successful tenure as a member of the Atlanta City Council into a seat as that body's president. Her tireless work on behalf of gay issues, and residents of the city, made her a clear Editors' Choice for Local Hero/Female.

The list of special people includes many others, including businessperson Cindy Abel, Decatur City Commissioner Kecia Cunningham and longtime activist Jim Marks. When it came to who knows "best," our readers were right on top of it.

For this Best of Gay Atlanta, we hoped to present our readers with a way to name some of the best places and the most interesting people across the city. The response from them, and our advertisers, has been overwhelming.

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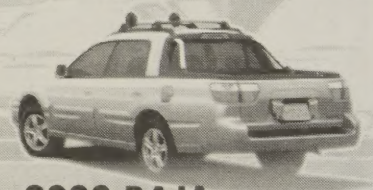
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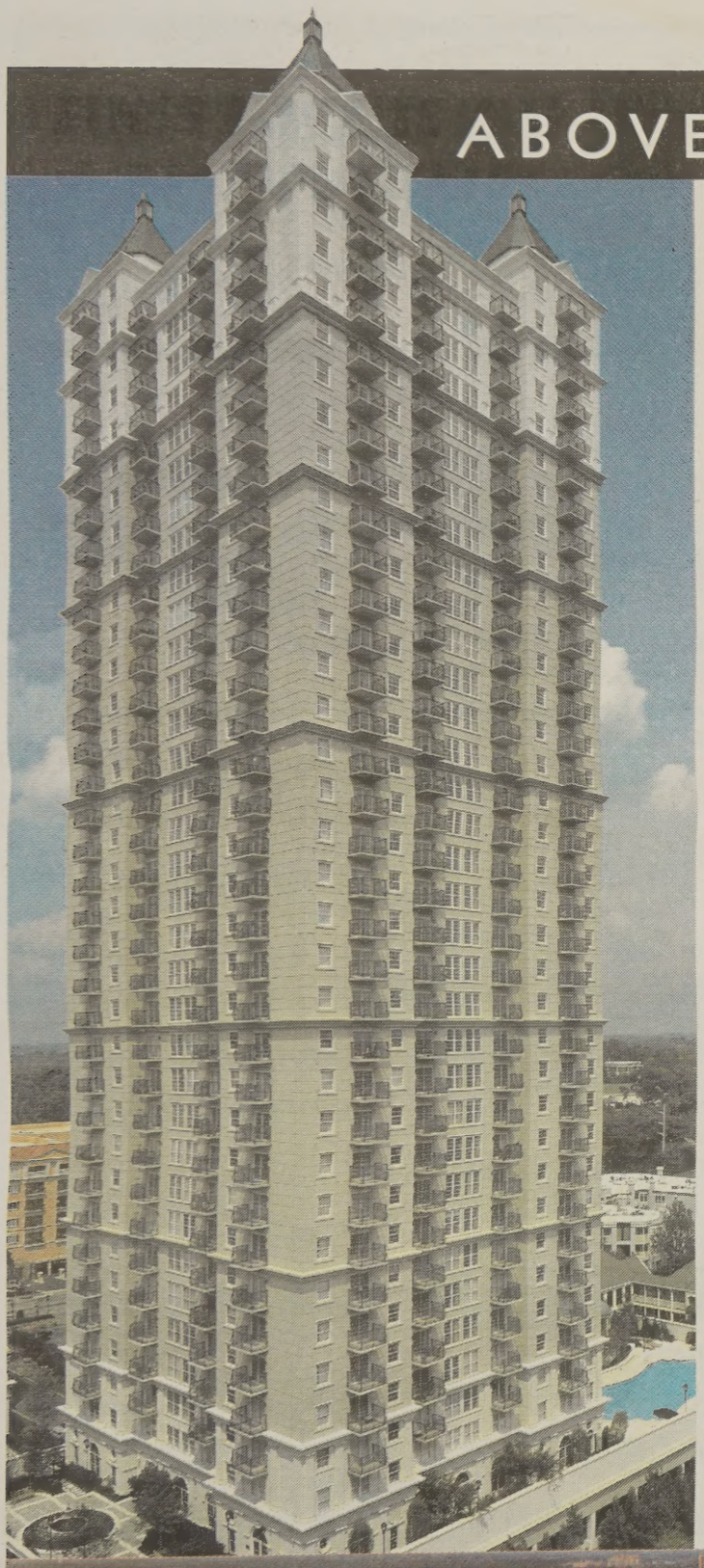

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best of gay atlanta

Best Brunch
Readers' Choice: Flying Biscuit
Editors' Choice: Park 75 at the Four Seasons Hotel

If your idea of brunch involves a gut-busting buffet, dressy clothes you'd rather not be wearing and sixteen members of your extended family, by all means make reservations at some convention hotel. But if you prefer the feel of lounging around a friend's kitchen table, make tracks for the Biscuit. While dinners at this pair of funky eateries sometimes overreach in their effort to be creative, the breakfasts are totally, reliably yummy, ample and soothing. Oatmeal pancakes with warm peach compote is one dreamy choice. Eggs scrambled with smoked salmon, cream cheese and basil is another. And of course there are those mile-high biscuits, which really do seem to fly. Second place went to **Einstein's**, third to **Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge**.

Best Overall Dining
Readers' Choice: Virginia's
Editors' Choice: Woodfire Grill

Though some critics have found it uneven, loyal patrons appreciate Virgina's earthy, inventive fare. Its roots are eclectic with tastes a little bit Mediterranean, a little bit Asian and a little bit Southwestern. Plates are presented with flair. Seafood specials are often tops. Another plus: prices for food and wine are quite reasonable. **Cowtipper's** took second, and **Nickiemoto's** placed third.

Most Romantic Restaurant
Readers' Choice: Virginia's
Editors' Choice: The Supper Club

It's the physical setting at Virginia's that gets lovers' pheromones flowing. Enter through the parking court of a trendy, renovated factory complex, then stroll through a lush, enveloping, trellised patio with a koi pond and burbling fountain. Once inside, the big, boxy space is rendered utterly charming with its collections of flea-market art, wacky lighting, Oriental carpets and velvet drapes. Tables are well-spaced for privacy, further enhancing the ability to whisper sweet nothings or slide an exploratory palm. **Apres Diem** placed second. and **Spice** came in third.

Most Trendy Restaurant
Readers' Choice: One Midtown Kitchen
Editors' Choice: One Midtown Kitchen

The look is spectacular, and the hipsters are turning out in droves to this recent arrival on the scene. A glowing purple wall, then a steel door, then an interior barrier of heavy drapes greets diners. Beyond them is an airy dining room with a sinuous curve of open kitchen, a bar with dramatic views over the park to the Midtown skyline and a dining terrace. Now that's trendy. And here's something else we hope will set a trend: artful contemporary food at noticeably moderate prices — entrees top out at around $19.

Flying Biscuit owner **Delia Champion** rushes with a hot pan of her restaurants' namesake. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

And a wine list divided into tiers, with every bottle priced at either $18, $28, $38 or $48. **Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge** and **Spice** were runners up.

Best Dessert
Readers' Choice: Cafe Intermezzo
Editors' Choice: Watershed

This authentically Italian-style café makes an intimate stop for a date, especially if seated on the romantically lit rear terrace. Cafe Intermezzo is also a destination for anybody with a sweet tooth. Visitors find an enormous selection of pastries. Coconut cake is a favorite, as are the numerous variations on cheesecake. There's also a huge range of coffee drinks and wines as well as a short meal menu. Second prize goes to **Joe's on Juniper**, whose goopy, just-like-you-wish-mama-used-to-make cakes come from Metrotainment Bakery. Third goes to the wittily inventive **Jake's Ice Cream**.

Best Value
Readers' Choice: Eats
Editors' Choice: Taqueria del Sol

Why is there always a crowd at Eats, the industrial-strength, cafeteria-style, assembly line of downmarket dining? Because the food is decent and the prices are ridiculously low. Never mind the ambiance, such as it is. Come for the pastas, the collard greens, and the wildly pop-

Please see **BEST** on **Page 7**

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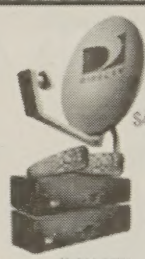
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best of gay atlanta

BEST, continued from **Page 5**

ular jerk chicken. Through your interactions with both staff and clientele, you can tap right into our city's thriving urban-edgy youth culture. Who knows where that might lead — and wherever it might be, you'll still have a pocketful of change left over from dinner. First runner up, **Joe's on Juniper**, followed by the **Flying Biscuit**.

Best Late Night
Readers' Choice: Joe's on Juniper
Editors' Choice: Loca Luna

Joe's has one of the most accommodating patios in town — raised up above the whooshing traffic of Juniper Street and amply shaded by old oak trees. At night, the deck provides a sparkling view of the ever-more-dazzling Midtown skyline. Joe's location just blocks from so many gay venues makes it the logical destination when nocturnal ramblings require a stop for refueling. Nearly 150 beers and some 30 single malt Scotches are further reasons to go. Unpretentious as it is, Joe's is a thousand times more sophisticated than the second place winner, **Waffle House**, or the third, **Dunk 'n' Dine**.

Tried & True
Readers' Choice: Cowtippers
Editors' Choice: Collonnade

We don't know whether it's the beef they serve, or the beefcake lounging around on the patio that gives Cowtippers such a loyal gay following. Maybe it's just the specialty margaritas. But Cowtippers is an unquestionable favorite and a perennial winner. If the food is uneven, the lively atmosphere and warm welcome are always reliable. Best of all, it's not necessary to rinse your hair blue in order to feel at home here — as so many regular customers do for second place winner **Collonnade** and third place **Mary Mac's Tea Room**.

Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse is a gay Atlanta favorite—for books *and* coffee. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

Best Intown Restaurant
Readers' Choice: Joe's on Juniper
Editors' Choice: Wisteria

Votes in this category were a curious mix. First and third went to Joe's and **Agnes and Muriel's**, respectively. Both are laid-back, rollicking eateries that serve unfussy, standard American fare not much different from what you might have grown up eating. At Joe's, that's wings, burgers, sandwiches and such. But second place went to **Bacchanalia**, one of this city's undisputed temples of forward-looking, original, highly serious dining — reservations required a month in advance, exquisite and rare boutique ingredients, plates as artfully designed as what hangs at the High and a whopping big bill at the end of the evening. This seeming inconsistency only proves that judgments about restaurants are always subjective.

Best Restaurant on the Outskirts
Readers' Choice: Bambinelli's
Editors' Choice: Five Seasons Brewing

When queers say "family," we usually mean each other. At Bambinelli's the word has a more traditional meaning: family-run, homey and kid friendly. In business for over 20 years, the place has a loyal following of customers who are likely to bring their own folks there for events like a 50th wedding anniversary dinner. The food is traditional Southern Italian — cheesy and tomato-rich, thyme- and oregano-scented and pasta-based. It might not be on the cutting edge, but neither was Grandma's. And it's richly satisfying. Second choice was **Outback Steak House**, and third was **Canoe**.

Best Coffeeshop
Readers' Choice: Starbucks at Ansley Mall
Editors' Choice: Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse

Location, location, location. The venerable coffee chain Starbucks realizes its mis-

Please see **BEST** on **Page 8**

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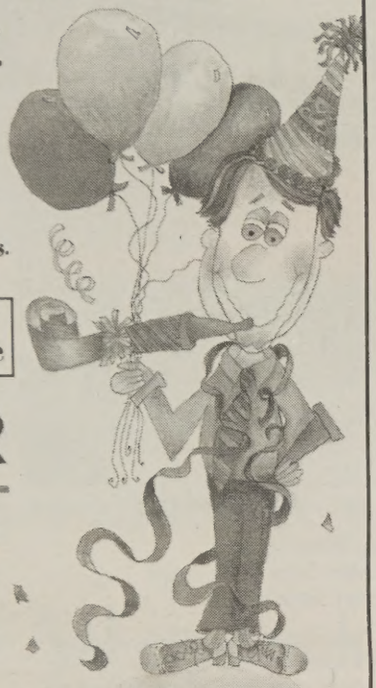

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best of gay atlanta

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sion to provide great coffee perfect proximity to where customers will be anyway. In the heart of the gay ghetto at the corner of Monroe Drive and Piedmont Avenue, with walking-distance access from Burkhart's, Oscar's, Disco Kroger and gay-popular hair salon Crimpers, the Starbucks at Ansley is a place to see and be seen when chillin' is the order of the day. A close second place went to gay-owned **Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse**; third place to **Java Monkey**.

Best Bookstore
Readers' Choice: Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse
Editors' Choice: Outwrite Bookstore & Coffeehouse, Charis Books & More

Gay owner Philip Rafshoon has made Outwrite an entrenched part of the gay scene with thousands of gay and lesbian-specific titles and regular readings and book-signings from some of the biggest names in the business. A steady flow of customers all day come to browse the shelves for books and gifts as well as to socialize in the cozy '50s-inspired coffee lounge. Second place went to **Charis Books & More** for its lesbian and female-focused works; **Border's Books** came in third. And our editors just couldn't decide between Outwrite and the feminist community at Charis.

Most Interesting Crowd
Readers' Choice: Halo
Editors' Choice: Apres Diem

Why do queers love Halo so much? Could it be because it's not actually a queer bar? Welcome to the real world, where anyone — if not necessarily anything — goes. But more than clientele accounts for the strong draw. Halo is sophisticated but without pretension. The sounds are international groove. The bar — illuminated from within, and subtly changing color as the evening progresses — is the coolest thing around.

Second place goes to **Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge**, and third to **Backstreet Atlanta**, both of which are also not exclusively gay scenes — which says something about how our lives and priorities may be changing.

Best Bartender
Readers' choice: David Watkins at Red Chair
Editors' Choice: Tim Wright at Blake's on the Park

A 24-year old man-boy, known for coifing his hair differently every day, found his niche at Red Chair and won the hearts of gay men to win this category. David Watkins, gay Atlanta's best bartender, said he is a natural for the job because he "loves people and alcohol" and doesn't have a problem remembering his patrons' drinks. And he's cute and single. The ladies almost won out with **Chloe** from My Sister's Room, who got second. Third went to **Tim Wright** at Blake's.

Best Place to Meet Men
Readers' Choice: Red Chair
Editors' Choice: Blake's on the Park

The hot new entry on the gay bar front is Red Chair. Our readers recognize it as the place to be seen and had. The large video screens provide a new approach — and alternative — to pulsing dance music so typical in other gay bars. And if you're in search of a crowd that ranges from twinks to preppy hunks, buy a drink and settle into a seat here. The cute bartenders aren't hard on the eyes, either. Second place went to **Blake's**; third place to the **Heretic**.

Best Bar in Midtown
Readers' Choice: Blake's on the Park
Editors' Choice: Halo

The venerable Blake's is always on the short list of places to hit on a weekend bar outing. With a crowd that's consistently attractive, Blake's provides an enjoyable

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Blake's on the Park is the ideal spot to have a few drinks and take in the scenery before heading to a favorite dance spot—that is if you don't end up taking some of that scenery home instead. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

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evening and a warm-up to the city's late-night dance spots. That's if you don't find Mr. Right Now and take your festivities to a more private locale. For a change of pace, stop by for the Sunday drag shows. Second place went to **Red Chair**; third place to **Halo**.

Best Lesbian Bar
Readers' Choice: My Sisters' Room
Editors' Choice: My Sisters' Room

Given the dearth of women's bars in Atlanta, it's no surprise that My Sisters' Room is tops in this category, both for our readers and Southern Voice editors. Yet even in a crowded field, this unique Decatur "parlour and garden" for women would shine. Sure, other nightclubs have bars, dance floors, pool tables and even patios. But where else can you hang out with hot women next to yard art that includes a double-decker bus and an old Cadillac, then sneak off to a real tee-pee for some special time with your special girl? Second place from our readers went to **Virginia's** on Thursday nights.

Best Place to Meet Women
Readers' Choice: My Sisters' Room
Editors' Choice: My Sisters' Room

Of course, the city's best lesbian bar would be our readers' and editors' choice as the best place to meet women, too. Smack in the middle of Dyke-catur, My Sisters' Room draws women of all types, with an emphasis on the young and hip. Watch for special events — like drag king shows and concerts — that might particularly attract your type of lady. **Virginia's** and **Hoedown's** took second and third in our reader survey.

Best Country Bar
Readers' Choice: Hoedown's
Editors' Choice: Hoedown's

When you want to pull yourself up by your boot straps, put a 10-gallon hat on your head and shake your ass to the tunes of favorite country singers, head to Hoedown's. It's easy to see why readers made this choice: The drinks are strong, the crowd is friendly and the times are fun. Lesbians make it their favorite place on Thursdays. On other nights, gay men are sure to find a variety of types and sizes with which to mingle, cruise, and two-step. Second place went to **Cowboys.**

Best Leather Bar
Readers' Choice: Atlanta Eagle
Editors' Choice: Heretic

Ask some gay men in Atlanta about the Eagle and their reaction is one of mock disgust. But peek inside the two-story structure on the weekend, and you're bound to find them inside. It's a reputation underserved for the Eagle, which features pounding music and a dance floor full of sweaty and hunky *men*. The Eagle certainly features a crowd you won't find anywhere else in the city, but it's a rich diversity that can make for a fun time. There's also a gift shop filled with toys for the leather crowd. Second place went to the **Heretic**; third place to the **Chamber**.

Best Bar Outside Gay Ghetto
Readers' Choice: Mary's
Editors' Choice: Mary's

As real estate prices skyrocket in Midtown, gay homebuyers are flocking to the charm and needs-a-little-attention properties in East Atlanta. And Mary's is quickly becoming the laid back place to be for area residents and even those who have to drive a bit to get there. The bar's easy access from Midtown, Little Five Points and I-20, as well as its reputation for drawing a fun mixed crowd to its quirky, funky, BradyBunch-inspired décor make it an easy choice for bar patrons inside and outside the up-and-coming gayborhood. Go late and stay until close. Second place went to **Le Buzz** in Cobb County.

Best Place for Live Music
Readers' Choice: Eddie's Attic
Editors' Choice: Eddie's Attic

Even under new ownership, Eddie's Attic remains the Southeast's proving ground for acoustic musicians, including no small number of queer singer-songwriters. Just a quick glance at the list of gay favorites who grace Eddie's stage — Indigo Girls, Kristen Hall, Michelle Malone, Halcyon — shows why this Decatur club is the top choice of both SoVo readers and editors when we're in the mood for music.

Atlanta Mayor **Shirley Franklin** ushers in a new era to City Hall. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

Local Hero: Female
Readers' Choice: Mayor Shirley Franklin
Editors' Choice: City Council President Cathy Woolard

Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin credited gays with helping her win election last year, and SoVo readers handed her another landslide victory as our female local hero. Franklin's combination of no-nonsense leadership and easy accessibility brought a new era to City Hall, and gay residents have

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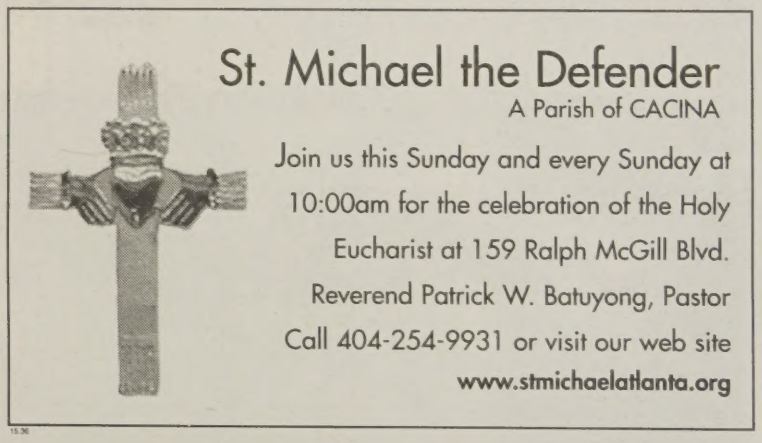
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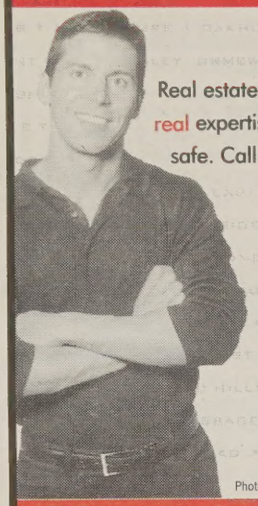

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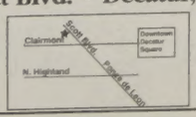

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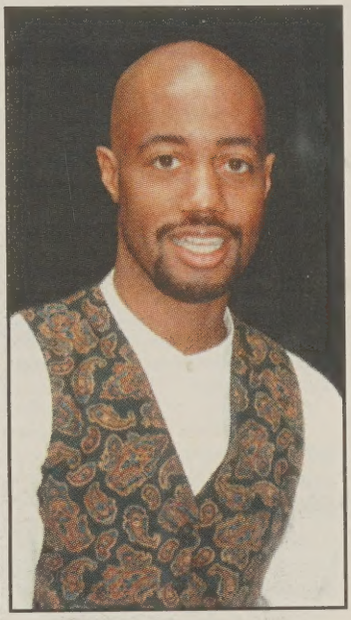
been welcomed to a place at her political table. Second in our readers survey — and our editors' choice for first — is Atlanta City Council President Cathy Woolard, the state's first openly gay elected official, and the second highest ranking municipal officer in the city. Our readers chose Q100 DJ **Melissa Carter** as third.



Craig Washington is at the forefront of gay activism.

Local Hero: Male
Readers' Choice: Craig Washington
Editors' Choice: Jeff Graham

Coming in just one vote ahead of Georgia Equality Executive Director **Allen Thornell**, Readers' Choice Craig Washington epitomizes the strength of local gay leadership. Now executive director of Atlanta's gay and lesbian community center, Washington's career here has provided a lesson on building bridges: between women and men, black and white, young and old, and those with different HIV status. Next on our readers' list after Washington and Thornell was Enlight Atlanta founder **Steve Epstein**, who recently moved to San Francisco. Jeff Graham placed first on our editors' list, for fighting the good fight from his days as a street activist with ACT UP Atlanta to his career as executive director at AIDS Survival Project.

Dynamic Couple
Readers' Choice: Cindy Abel & Barbara Rubin
Editors' Choice: Kecia Cunningham & Lenny Lasater

Cindy Abel and Barbara Rubin, our Readers' Choice for dynamic couple, have been partners for more than six years. In that time, they've also made their mark

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the Atlanta community. Rubin is a Fulton County court psychologist as well as psychologist in private practice. As president of bizvox Marketing Communications, Abel handles public relations for a number of gay groups and businesses, and her pro bono clients have included Georgia Equality and HRC Atlanta. Abel also serves on the national board of the Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund. Second place from the readers went to **Tim Wright** and **Tommy Field**. But after Decatur City Commissioner Kecia Cunningham's moving speech at this year's HRC dinner thanking her life partner, Lenny Lasater, SoVo editors had to give the nod to this long-term lesbian partnership.

Kecia Cunningham helped win domestic partner benefits for Decatur city employees.

Committed Activist: Female
Readers' Choice: Kecia Cunningham
Editors' Choice: Linda Ellis

When our Readers' saw "activist," they thought gay politics. Decatur City Commissioner Kecia Cunningham, the state's first openly gay African-American elected official, took first place over Atlanta City Council President **Cathy Woolard** by one vote. In addition to helping win non-discrimination protections and domestic partner benefits for Decatur city employees, Cunningham serves on the advisory board for CHRIS Homes, which provides housing for young people in need, and on the board of directors for Leadership DeKalb. Editors' Choice goes to Linda Ellis, who served as YouthPride's first executive director and now serves as ED of the Atlanta Lesbian Cancer Initiative.

Committed Activist: Male
Readers' Choice: Jim Marks
Editors' Choice: Jimmie Scott

Also or perhaps better known as drag queen Bubba D. Licious, Jim Marks has worked tirelessly on behalf of local AIDS

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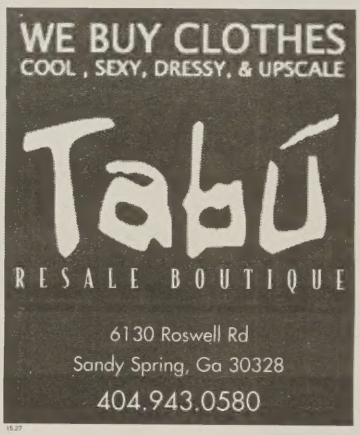

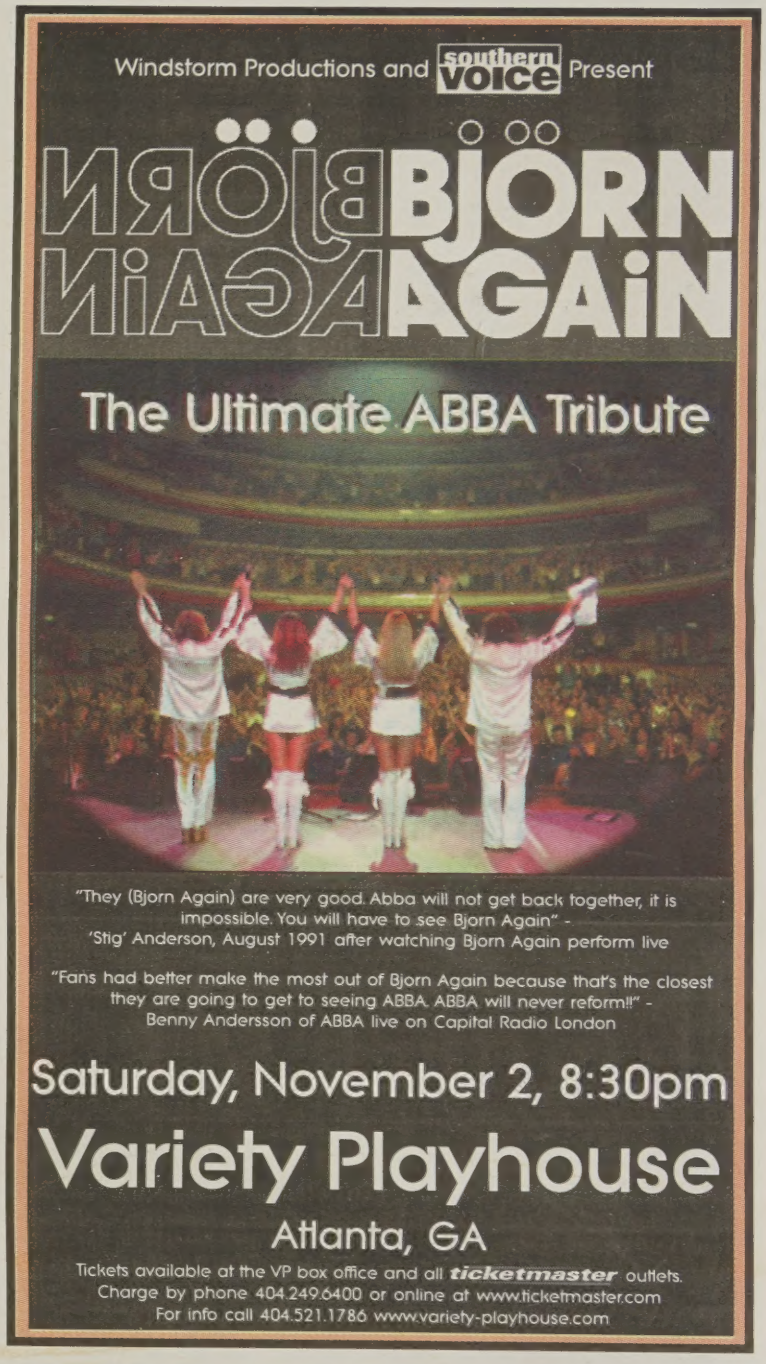
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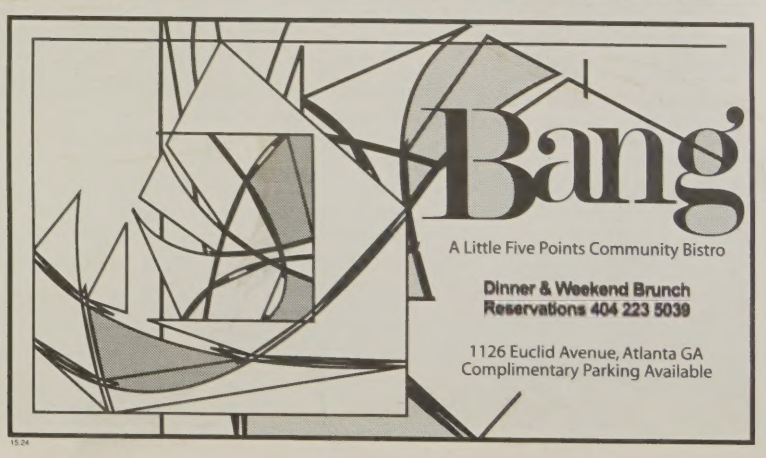

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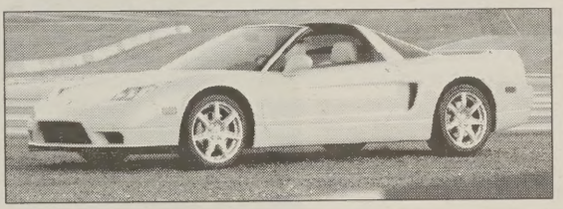

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best of gay atlanta

BEST, continued from **Page 11**

organizations. By day, Marks serves as chief financial officer at the NAMES Project, which organizes the AIDS memorial quilt, after previously serving as CFO at AID Atlanta. By night, Bubba can be found on stages throughout the city, emceeing benefits supporting AIDS and gay causes. Second and third place went to **Duncan Teague** and **Tom Dempsey**. Jimmie Scott wins the editors' nod for his vocal work to increase visibility for black gays, from his work with Georgia Equality to the Black Gay Pride march.

Committed Activist: Trans
Readers' Choice: Monica Helms
Editors' Choice: Monica Helms

Name an issue important to transgendered people in Atlanta in the last few years, and Monica Helms has been there leading the fight — as both readers and editors clearly see. Helms serves as president of Trans=Action; her own activism has ranged from helping transgendered people negotiate the often hostile process of applying for drivers' licenses, to organizing an annual memorial for trans crime victims, to lobbying for inclusion of gender identity in non-discrimination laws. Second place goes to **Sir Jesse** of Decatur.

Monica Helms has been leading the fight for transgendered rights as president of Trans=Action.

Lesbian Cancer Initiative won second and third. For our editors, it's a tie between Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund and ACLU of Georgia for their extensive work, often side-by-side, in helping secure and defend the legal rights of gay Georgians.

Best Up and Coming Business Person
Readers' Choice: Dean Chronopoulos
Editors' Choice: Cindy Abel

With Atlanta's long-standing solid business and entertainment economies, newly married Dean Chronopoulos is "honored and humbled" to be chosen "Best Up and Coming Business Person" of the year. As the owner of gay-popular Roxx Tavern on Cheshire Bridge Road, Chronopoulos has "been very close to the gay community in Atlanta for many years through politics and business, and I could not have asked for a better clientele," he said. Roxx, which opened in June of 2000, epitomizes the casual pub atmosphere with an extensive bar, pleasant patio and a well-honed kitchen serving great steaks, salads and comfort food that keep gay Atlantans coming back. **Philip Rafshoon** and **Linda Bass** took second and third.

Best Gimmick Night
Readers' Choice: '80s Trivia at Joe's on Juniper
Editors' Choice: Karaoke at Mary's

The Metrotainment restaurant group that includes Einstein's, Joe's on Juniper and Cowtippers has long been recognized for its gay-friendly lunch and dinner venues. But things get special on Thursday at Joe's as teams of early Gen X-ers vie for pitchers of beer and a grand prize, testing their memories on trivia from the '80s. Categories include popular fashion, celebrities, music, television, politics and movies from the decade that just won't die. Second place went to **Virginia's** lesbian night; Bare Chest night at the **Heretic** came in third.

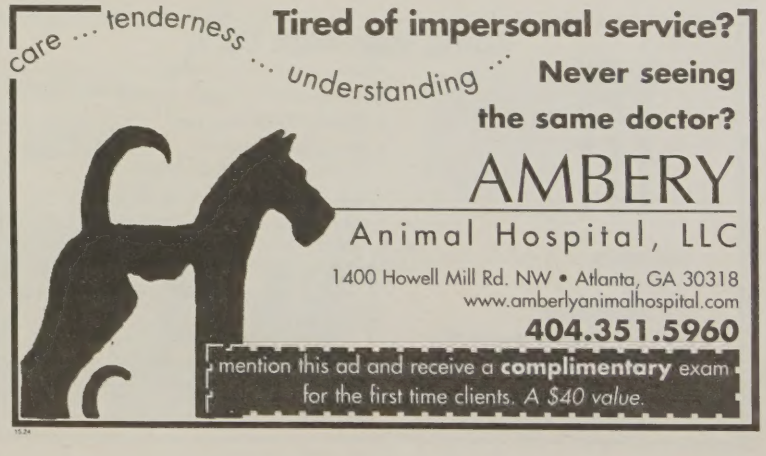
Best Neighborhood Pub
Readers' Choice: Blake's on the Park
Editors' Choice: Burkhart's Atlanta

With walking access from gay-popular Piedmont Park and many gay homes and apartments, Blake's on the Park handily took this category with as many votes as its two closest competitors combined. With an English pub décor, high-energy videos and a crowd that swamps the place night after night, Blake's remains the undisputed champion of Atlanta gay bars. The venue recently added a food menu to its weeklong repertoire of DJs, Drag shows and special events, so they are primed and ready to keep customers walking through the doors all week long. Second place went to **Mary's**; **Joe's on Juniper** took third.

Most Effective Non-Profit
Readers' Choice: Project Open Hand
Editors' Choice: Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, ACLU of Georgia

You can't argue with numbers. Although readers honored a wide variety of local gay and AIDS groups in this category, Project Open Hand is the winner, well, hands down. Originally founded to provide meals and nutrition services to people with HIV/AIDS, the group has expanded its mission to include people with other serious illnesses and homebound seniors. In the past 14 years, the group has delivered more than four million meals, thanks to a dedicated staff and literally thousand of volunteers. **AIDS Survival Project** and **Atlanta**

Please see **BEST** on **Page 16**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best of gay atlanta

BEST, continued from **Page 15**

Best Happy Hour
Readers' Choice: Blake's on the Park
Editors' Choice: Red Chair Restaurant & Lounge

As gay Atlanta gets off work every day, it's time for many to go to Blake's to wind down. Prices drop and the place gets packed from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. For professionals who want to relax and unwind with some of the cutest guys and gals in Atlanta, it's no surprise that one of the most popular gay bars in Midtown also offers this kind of customer-appreciation on a regular basis. Following just one vote behind, **Red Chair** took second place; **Burkhart's Atlanta** came in third. Between the three, there's a happy hour in town for every taste.

Best Musician
Readers' Choice: Jennifer Nettles
Editors' Choice: Doria Roberts

She isn't gay, but gosh, the girls love her. Jennifer Nettles, our readers' choice for best local musician, first made a name for herself with the now defunct local band Soul Miner's Daughter, then went solo in 1999. Catch Nettles wowing audiences on the Atlanta Pride stage, or at venues throughout Atlanta — including Eddie's Attic, now owned by her husband, Todd Van Sickle. Angela Motter also got votes from our readers, while the editors' nod goes to Doria Roberts. In addition to her own powerful music, Roberts has taken the lead — from her Queerstock music fest and CD to being the impetus behind the recent Ladyfest South — in bringing other gay artists into the limelight.

Straight musician **Jennifer Nettles** is a lesbian favorite.

Best Drag Queen
Readers' Choice: Raven
Editors' Choice: Charlie Brown

It takes more than flashy costumes and big boobs to make a drag queen. You gotta have fake nails, wigs, originality, and pizazz. Not surprisingly, the readers chose to crown Raven as the best drag queen in Atlanta. Whether she's lighting a stage on fire or doing Wonder Woman, Raven wooed our readers. See her sparkle in Charlie Brown's Cabaret at Backstreet. The second choice was **Heather McDaniels** and **Bubba D. Licious** takes the bronze.

Please see **BEST** on **Page 19**

Readers crowned **Raven** Best Drag Queen.

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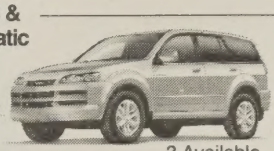

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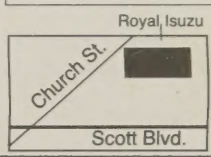

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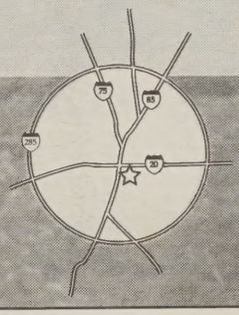

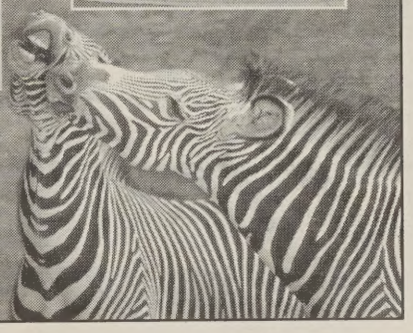

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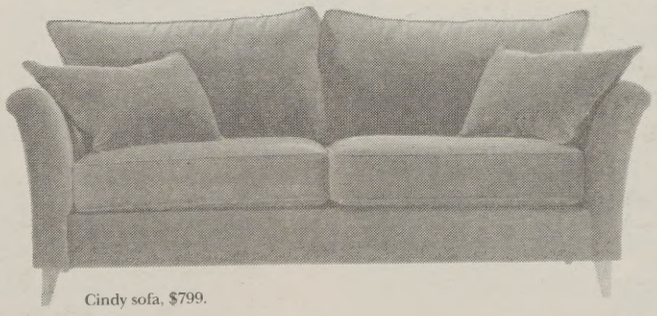

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Home of the readers' Best Drag Show and Best Dance floor: **Backstreet**.

BEST, continued from **Page 16**

Best Drag King
Readers' Choice: Cowboy
Editors' Choice: Atlanta Kings

Response from voters overwhelmingly support the homecoming king. Taking a whopping 88 percent of the vote, Cowboy wins the adulation of Southern Voice readers for being the best drag king in Atlanta. Cowboy performs as part of the Atlanta Kings, who perform at My Sister's Room fairly regularly. Don't miss the sweet young stud in a Halloween performance on Oct. 25. **"Kane"** took second place. Sadly, no one else got any votes. SoVo editors like the whole Atlanta Kings troupe so much, we refused to pick just one.

Best DJ
Readers' Choice: DJ Derrick Shawn
Editors' Choice: DJ Biff

The DJ responsible for the music at Blake's walks away with this coveted spinster's award. Curiously, no one dances at Blake's, but DJ Derrick Shawn keeps the voting barflies bobbing their heads in sync and sets the mood with the tried-and-true videos. **DJ Co Qui** finished second, and **Rob Reum** got third.

Best Dance Club
Readers' Choice: Backstreet
Editors' Choice: Blu

Atlanta's legendary **Backstreet Atlanta** took the title of Best Dance Club, nipping **Blu** and the **Heretic**. With its blaring techo music, strobe lights, a mixture of gay men (many shirtless at some point), Buckhead partiers and out-of-town visitors all on the nightclub's huge dance floor, not to mention the always-open doors, it's no wonder Backstreet boogied to this category.

Best Drag Show
Readers' Choice: Backstreet
Editors' Choice: The Armorettes

Nosing out **Blake's** and the **Atlanta Kings**, Backstreet Atlanta makes it two for two here. The world-famous X-rated cabaret features entertainment from the likes of Raven and Heather Daniels, but hovering over it all is emcee Charlie Brown, whose potty mouth and risque acts have made her a household name. Her shows sell out regularly – and don't you forget it!

Best Gym
Readers' Choice: L.A. Fitness
Editors' Choice: Fitness Factory, Extreme Bodyworks

Despite stiff competition from **Urban Body Fitness** and **Fitness Factory**, readers liked the 15-year-old L.A. Fitness, formerly known as Australian Body Works.

Please see **BEST** on **Page 21**

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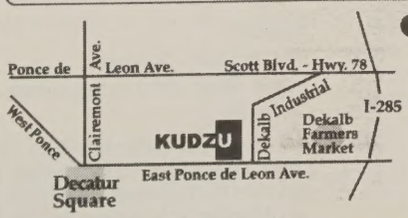

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best of gay atlanta

Sure, it's a great place to jog or walk your miniature doberman, but it's the cruising that keeps gay men flocking to Piedmont Park. (Photo by R.O. Youngblood)

BEST, continued from **Page 19**

From its convenient locations (almost a dozen spread throughout the metro area) to its flexible hours to its amenities (aerobics, racquetball courts, pools at some areas, and its attractive staff and members, L.A. Fitness reigns supreme.

Best Local Artist
Readers' Choice: K.T. Kilborn
Editors' Choice: Robert Sherer

Emory grad K.T. Kilborn's "Underground TRANSit," a one-person show dealing with gender-bender politics, has been staged at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival and recently by Theatre OUTlanta. A brave performer, she has been seen in mainstream roles ("As You Like It," "Fool For Love"), more unorthodox pieces such as "The Vagina Monologues" and worked with Karen Hughes at the W.O.W. Café and Theater. Kilborn is tops here, besting **Shannon Lake**.

Best Art Gallery
Readers' Choice: High Museum of Art
Editors' Choice: Timothy Tew

Though **Eye Drum** has its supporters, the High Museum of Art is the clear choice as Atlanta's best art gallery. With work on display from Michelangelo to Monet to the favorite paintings of Elton John, it's a classy and nationally renowned city landmark.

Atlanta artist **Robert Sherer** 's provocative—and often controversial—artwork caught the attention of Southern Voice editors.

Best Spot to Cruise
Readers' Choice: Piedmont Park
Editors' Choice: Home Depot

It is, after all, Atlanta and trying to narrow the list of cruise spots to one is a difficult task. But the tried and true Piedmont Park always comes through. There's cruising during the day along the vast green spaces, from dog walkers, runners to roller-bladers. There's always some jocks strutting their stuff on the tennis courts or the ballfields. And at night, cruising takes on a more focused feel, moving to the edge of the botanical gardens near Piedmont Avenue, or across the park near 10th Street and

Please see **BEST** on **Page 23**

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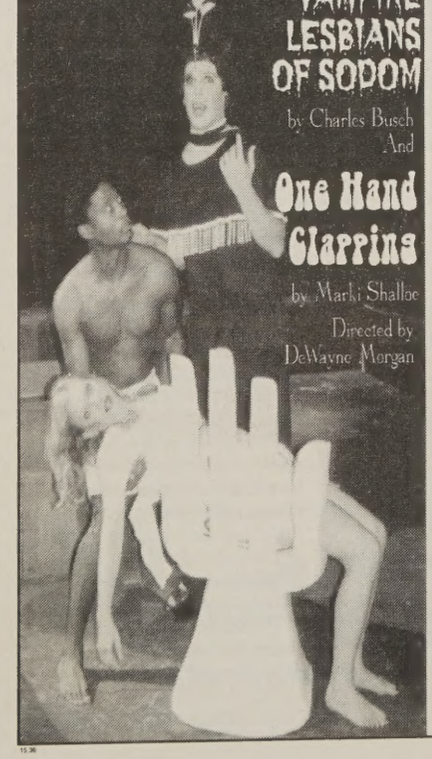

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best of gay atlanta

BEST, continued from **Page 21**

Monroe, where gay men cruise in their autos along the narrow parking lot that overlooks a corner of the Atlanta's version of Central Park. Second place went to the **Tara**; third place to **Publix**. Gay men are always certain to find a good screw at Home Depot on Sydney Marcus Boulevard, making it the favorite for Editors' Choice.

Best Theater
Readers' Choice: Fox Theatre
Editors' Choice: Actor's Express

Midtown's opulent Fox Theatre is your recommended place to see a theatrical show, beating out **7 Stages** and **Actor's Express**. And what's not to like about the decades-old auditorium, where a balcony seat literally sits you under the stars? It's the reigning Atlanta entertainment arena, hosting second-run Broadway shows ("Mamma Mia!," "Aida") as well as a summer film series and special events throughout the calendar year.

Best Video Store
Readers' Choice: Movies Worth Seeing
Editors' Choice: Southern Nights

While both **Blockbuster** and **Brushstrokes** are high on the list of places to rent a flick, the top choice (not surprisingly) is Movies Worth Seeing, which pleases everyone from the mainstream moviegoer to the pure cineaste. Besides new releases, it boasts more than a 100 gay and lesbian titles (many obscure), as well as the best selection of foreign releases in the city.

Best Music
Readers' Choice: Tower Records
Editors' Choice: E.d.'s Gourmet

Atlantans must like to finish their workout and then shop for new CDs. Tower Records is located next to L.A. Fitness. With its wonderfully eclectic range (pop, classical, soundtracks, disco, gay and lesbian faves, country, etc.), Tower is your fave place for new songs, edging **E.d.'s** and **Brushstrokes**.

Best Clothing
Readers' Choice: Boy Next Door Menswear
Editors' Choice: Banana Republic

No contest here — gay patrons buy their killer duds at Boy Next Door more than second and third place winners **Abercrombie & Fitch** and **Old Navy**. Whether looking to make an impression on a first date or dressing for that upcoming circuit party, the conveniently-located Boy Next Door is the city's gay clothing hot spot.

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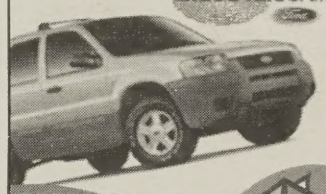
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Creative sparks are catching fire as the inaugural First Glance Atlanta festival spotlights exciting performances October 18 — November 3. So light your creative fire by visiting the city that embraces inclusion — in political leadership, business policies and gay-friendly neighborhoods where couples walk hand-in-hand.

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ATLANTA BALLET'S JOHN WELKER, PHOTO BY CHARLIE MCCULLERS